

Albany Wedding (1916)

*John Q. Barrett**

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In summer 1911, Robert H. Jackson was a nineteen-year-old high school graduate who was working to become a lawyer. He had spent the past year as an apprentice to two Jamestown, New York, lawyers (one of whom was Jackson's distant relative by his widowed grandmother's late in life remarriage).

To complement that preparation, Jackson decided to spend the coming academic year as a student at Albany Law School. It was a strong, independent, long-established law school with a two-year academic program. It decided, in admitting Jackson, to give him credit for his year as a law apprentice—in effect, Albany admitted Jackson to its “senior” class as a transfer student.

At Albany Law School, Robert Jackson was a serious, very successful student. He also had a social life. A classmate introduced his cousin, Irene Alice Gerhardt of Kingston, New York, to Jackson. She, a year-plus older than he, was a business (secretarial) school graduate who worked as a stenographer in New York State's excise department. She was smart and quick witted, literary, athletic, and strikingly beautiful—and Robert Jackson fell in love. They dated, including on ice skates at Albany's Washington Park. They attended dances. She was Jackson's date at Albany Law School's graduation in June 1912.

Following that academic year, Jackson returned to western New York while Miss Gerhardt remained in Albany. He resumed apprenticing for the Jamestown lawyers, who let him take on increasing responsibilities. In 1913, when he had reached the required age of twenty-one, Jackson took and passed New York's bar examination and was admitted to law practice. He then commenced solo practice in Jamestown. He struggled at first but

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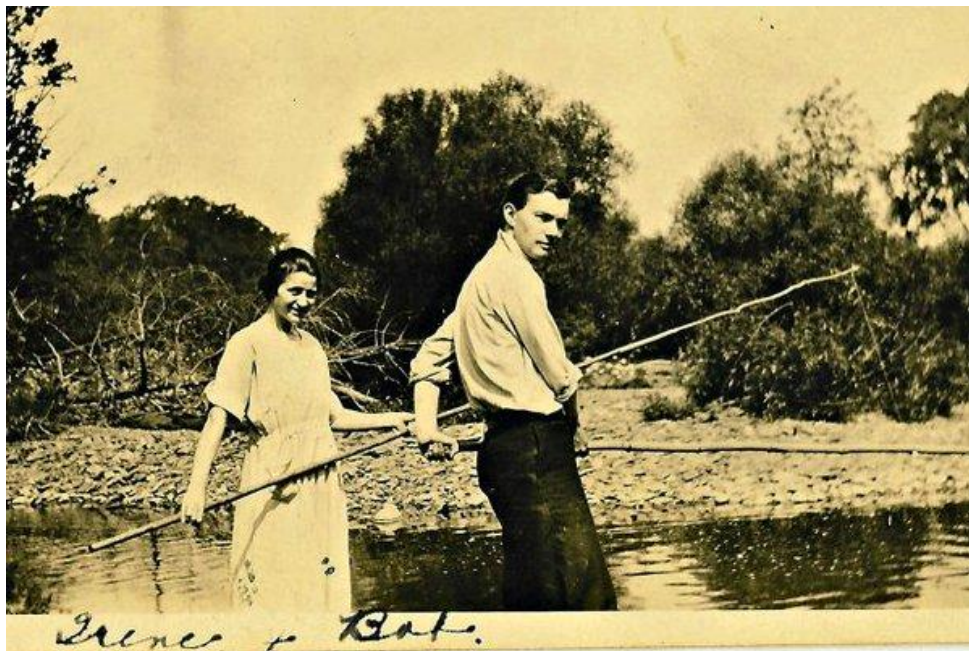
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soon attracted local notice and paying clients, then higher profile clients and cases, growing regional renown, and, in time, a variety of offers to practice with others.

As Jackson established himself professionally, he also continued to court Irene Gerhardt on the other side of New York State. They wrote many letters. Each visited the other occasionally, with chaperones present of course—Irene came to meet Jackson’s family in Frewsburg, New York, his boyhood home south of Jamestown, for example, and at least once he spent Christmas with Irene and her mother Margaret Gerhardt, a widow who had moved to Albany.



Mrs. Gerhardt, at first concerned that Jackson was “too skinny,” apparently came to approve of him. As 1916 began, she announced her daughter Irene’s engagement to Mr. Jackson, and that their wedding would take place in the springtime.

On Monday, April 24, 1916, the day following Easter Sunday, Irene Gerhardt (age 25) and Robert Jackson (age 24) were married in St. Peter’s Protestant Episcopal Church, a grand edifice at State and Lodge Streets in Albany. The Reverend Dr. Charles C. Harriman, rector of the church, officiated. The ceremony, held at noontime, was a small one. Frank H.

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Mott, the Jamestown lawyer to whom Jackson was distantly related and for whom he apprenticed, was his protégé's best man (and Mott gave the bride, as a wedding gift, a book on how to keep house.) Irene wore a blue traveling suit and hat and carried flowers. Her sister Elizabeth (Betty) was her bridesmaid.

424 1916		Marriages.			
DATE	MAN		WOMAN		
	CHRISTIAN NAME	SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	SURNAME	
Mar 22	Merritt S.	Giles	Celestia	Edick	
	Residence: Amherst, Mass. Birthplace: Cherry Valley, N.Y.	Age 24 yrs Clerk P. Mary G. Nov. 1891 Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	Residence: Amherst, Mass. Birthplace: Springfield, Mass.	Age 24 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	
April 24	Robert Houghwout	Jackson	Irene Alice	Gerhardt	
	Residence: Jamestown, N.Y. Birthplace: Spring Creek, Pa.	Age 24 yrs Lawyer P. William E. Nov. 1891 Parents: William Houghwout - - -	Residence: 515 Hamilton St Birthplace: Kingston, N.Y.	Age 25 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	
April 24	Walter Elibee	Johnson	Aurildta Rosamond	Doro	
	Residence: St. Louis, Mo. Birthplace: Brownville, Ind.	Age 34 yrs School teacher P. Henry Johnson Nov. 1881 Parents: David Van Vender	Residence: Brandon, VT Birthplace: Brandon, VT.	Age 24 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	
May 24	George Albert	Stahlbusch	Helena Carter	Bryan	
	Residence: Stillville, Columbia Co., N.Y. Birthplace: Ghent, N.Y.	Age 24 yrs Single teacher P. Otto - - - Parents: Louis Stahlbusch - U.S.	Residence: 62 Lodge Street Birthplace: New Haven, CT	Age 19 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	
May 25	John Cousinsberg	Edwards	Marie Evelyn	Illoth	
	Residence: Albany Hospital Birthplace: Randall, N.Y.	Age 24 yrs - Physician P. William - - - Parents: Mary Cousinsberg - - -	Residence: 135 Temple Street Birthplace: Sat. Supply, Ind. Tex.	Age 21 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	
July 11th	William Oase	Jones	Florence Anville	Arnold	
	Residence: Schenectady, N.Y. Birthplace: Alderdale, Kentucky	Age 24 yrs - Case Engineer P. John R. Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	Residence: New Orleans, Louisiana Birthplace: Clinton, Louisiana	Age 26 yrs Parents: Edith Merrill - - -	

From the Parish Register, St. Peter's Church.

Following the wedding, Mrs. Gerhardt hosted a luncheon at her Albany home for the newlyweds.

Later that afternoon, the Jacksons left on a honeymoon trip to New York City and points south, including Washington, D.C.

In June 1916, they became Jamestown residents. They soon moved to Buffalo, where Robert practiced law during 1917 and 1918. They returned to Jamestown that fall, when Irene was expecting their first child (their son William Eldred Jackson). Soon he had a sister (Mary Margaret Jackson).

The Jacksons lived in Jamestown fulltime for about fifteen more years. During those years, they returned to Albany regularly to visit Irene's mother.

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And in 1934, of course, they returned to Washington, when President Roosevelt nominated and the Senate confirmed Robert H. Jackson's first (of five) appointments to high federal office.